...ISH

by Phil Pascoe, Big Finish Productions 2002

Transcript provided by Sara Marie Schepis

A Drama in Four Episodes

The Setting:

Place - a lexicographer's conference where language lovers are set to unveil an amazing creation… the Lexisphere.

Time -Whenever 'the present' is on this planet.

Cast:
The Doctor: – a Time Lord, a far-ranging traveler, and a champion of good. Currently in his sixth incarnation.
Peri Brown – The Doctor's companion. A loyal but feisty American girl along for the adventures in time and space.
BOOK – a hologlyph designed to be the ultimate, near infinite, lexicographer.
Warren – A rabble-rouser and gadfly to the lexicographers
Professor Osefa de Palabra Hftzbrn – Head of the Lexisphere Project and BOOK's boss. Friend of Doctor's.
Symposiarch Robert Cawdrey – a word specialist and patron who works with Osefiah to run the conference.
The Ish – Sentient memes!
Other cast - attendees of the conference, a Robot waiter.

The Story

Episode One:

Doctor Who theme plays]

Scene 1.1 – Somewhere on Campus

[Sound of a hologlyph coming on]
BOOK: New entry …*ish*, three letters, I-S-H, ish, pronunciation variations: issh, eish, ishh. Sometimes hyphenated or preceded by an ellipsis, but in usual circumstances operating as a suffix. It adds meaning but is not meaningful in itself. Exceptions to follow. *Ish*…almost a word, not quite a fragment something slightly askew…

Scene 1.2 – At the Conference Center

Osefa: Excuse me. Sorry. Coming through
Man: Prof-professor! … We exchanged a few words at the last faculty party. It's most pleasant to catch you again.
Osefa: Yes, thank you.
Man: I've had a chance to, uh, collect my thoughts. Tell me, in your recent paper on language as—
Osefa: Yes, thank you
[moves off. Man makes disappointed sound.]

Scene 1.3 - In Osefa's office

Osefa: Ah. Now. Let me think. Pens. Pens, pens, pens! Paper. Oh, dear. BOOK! BOOK? BOOK!!
[Sound of a hologlyph coming on]
BOOK: At your service professor.
Osefa: BOOK, good. No, not good. Where have you been? Ah, never mind. Last minute changes too, I expect. Where are those papers?
BOOK: Is there a problem?
Osefa: Yes, yes, yes. That man has rearranged the proceedings again. Apparently we've got new investors. Or we will do if I re-write the preamble to include them.
BOOK: I'm accessing the attendee register now to check their names.
Osefa: Good. But I have so much else to get done. Can you quickly double-check the whole thing?
BOOK: A few words giving you trouble? Incidentally, *that man* left a message for you a short while ago, if you could call him as soon as possible.
Osefa: [Sighs loudly] Put me through.
[Connection opened]
Cawdrey: Cawdrey speaking
Osefa: Listen, could you please clear the hall. I cannot have all these people milling about outside my rooms.
Cawdrey: All right, I'll have a word with the attendees. Now, Osefiah, your speech… have you completed it yet? You know we can't risk upsetting the delegates. Some of them are here on quite short notice, you know. Get BOOK to write it for you. What are we paying him for if not to help you?
Osefa: BOOK has other work, too.
[Sound of BOOK mumbling his work in the background]
Osefa: Please, BOOK, I'm trying to— [Exasperated sound] OFF!
[Sound of hologlyph turning off. Osefa sighs]
Osefa: Time to work. No time at all. [Papers rustle] Oh, I told BOOK to check this. Right, I must do it myself. Yes… fine… Oh, for crying out loud! Such an obvious…! I really am working too hard. Let me think. What's another word for…

Scene 1.4 – outside the conference center

[Noise of the TARDIS arriving and then its door opens and shuts.]
Peri: Hey, this isn't bad. Did we take a wrong turn and end up somewhere interesting?
Doctor: Interesting?! A convocation of linguists, lexicologists, and logomaniacs? Everybody from abcdarians to zeno-philologists? From all dog-eared corners of the articulate universe? Peri, this is interesting!… [Bumping into someone] Ooof!
Warren: Oh, I'm…oh! [laughs] I'm really sorry. [He walks away.] Doctor: That young man ought to watch where he's going. As I was saying…
Peri: This is kind of an inter-galactic spelling bee?
Doctor: Bee? Spelling bee?
Peri: Okay, probably not.
Doctor: Peri, the only "B" you're likely to find here is at the head of an exhaustive list of definitions.
Peri: Well, that's my point. This conference is all about putting together a huge dictionary.
Doctor: The Lexicon!
Peri: And this Lexicon lists every definition of every word.
Doctor: Well, it's not that simple, but yes. The Lexicon was reputed to be the most comprehensive dictionary of the English language ever written.
Peri: So what's the big deal about my occasional New-England-ism? It's all language. Dictionaries don't care about trans-Atlantic differences.
Doctor: At their peril. You might touch on colonial illegitimatizations momentarily in the name of completeness, but it's English! The language of Chaucer.

Peri: Chaucer?
Doctor: Well, of Shakespeare.
Peri: Shakespeare?
Doctor: Of *me*! The uninfracted tongue. That's the core of the endeavor. Get it wrong and what would be the point?
Peri: Can't you give me a break this one time?
Doctor: Peri, try to envisage the scope of the matter. It takes a rare perspicacity to devote one's life to the lexicographer's craft. A quality I can't say I've known very many to possess. There was Sir James Murray, of course. Dr. Johnson.
Peri: Noah Webster?
Doctor: Uugh, that pestilent scribbler! The vandalism he wrought…huh! Where shall I begin?
[A man approaches.]
Cawdrey: Doctor? Robert. Sorry, Symposiarch Cawdrey. It says on my badge. [Chuckles] Welcome!
Doctor: Oh. Hello, Symposiarch. Peri, Symposiarch Cawdrey, the convener of this congregated cornucopia.
Peri: Hi. I'm his translator.
Doctor: We were just in the area hoping to call in on an old friend. We're not on the guest list for the conference, I'm afraid. Cawdrey: Nonsense! Osefa's mentioned you many a time. Indeed, she held what I thought, up until now, a rather optimistic belief that you'd appear.
Peri: Try and keep him away.
Cawdrey: The Doctor's known quite ubiquitously for his mastery of English.
Doctor: [Pleased] Oh, is that the case? Mastery of English, umm? Well, I'd reverse the roles, personally. It is English that has mastered me.
[Cawdrey's communicator chimes]
Peri: See what I mean?
Cawdrey: Excuse me. [Into device] Hello? [Continues indistinctly]
Doctor: English! What a remarkable, versatile language, ever expanding, adapting, surviving! But never compromising its integrity nor its poetry. One of the foremost achievements of humankind, a living language in the truest sense, and a language worth living.
Cawdrey: [in the background, angrily into communicator] Yes. Good-bye!!
Peri: No one we ever meet speaks anything else.
Cawdrey: [To Peri.] English does provide a most useful *lingua franca* for our conferences.
Doctor: Centuries after Noah Webster's so-called 'reforms.' Reforms! I ask you! It's not 'eye-zed-ee' or even 'eye-zee-ee.' It's 'eye-ess-ee!' And it's not O-R, it's O-U-R!
Peri: Oh, you *are*…
Doctor: Across the night sky, beyond the stars, English brings people together in the pursuit of knowledge and wonder.
Cawdrey: Said things are afoot. We start in the auditorium, presently, and you're more than welcome to join us.
Doctor: We'd be delighted. Wouldn't we… Peri? Where's she wandered off to? I told her she won't want to miss this. I was quite clear. [Sighs] Divided by a common language.
Cawdrey: She'll amuse herself, I'm certain. Now, I must fetch the professor for her keynote address. Will you join me?
Doctor: Oh! Acquired her professorship, has she? That's very good. About time too.
[They go off.]

Scene – in a café of some sort

Peri: I'll have the lunch special and whatever's on tap.
Robot: One moment please.
Peri: [In apostrophe] Huh! I'll give you spelling reform, Doctor. See how you like to spell—

Warren: Hey! Hi. We're the only people in here not wearing tweed.
Peri: [Laughs softly] You're the guy from earlier? With the slippery books.
Warren: Oh, don't worry. I'm not one of the dryasdusts. No, I'm here for sadder reasons. I'm a logophile.
Peri: Logophile?
Warren: From *logos* and *philia*?
Robot: Your lunch, madam.
Peri: Thanks.
Warren: Hang-- hang about! Hold on. Am I annoying someone important?
Robot: Sir?
Warren: It is, isn't it? I thought I recognized you. From that talk you gave on robot linguistics.
Robot: I dabble.
Warren: You probably get this all the time — I hate to be one of those kinds of people — but would you please sign my dictionary?
Robot: Oh! Uh, sir. [Signs it]
Warren: Thanks. [Robot leaves]
Peri: Logophile.
Warren: Did I embarrass myself? Was I speaking too fast? Am I still speaking too fast? Can I buy the next round?
Peri: [Laughs] Hi, I'm Peri.
Warren: Warren.

Scene- Conference building

Doctor: Well, I suppose the last time I saw Osefa must have been shortly after she began she began her prospectus for the Lexicon.
Cawdrey: Not that long ago, then. We're all very pleased with how far the professor has come in only a few years. Just not in the past few hours.
Doctor: She's still working as we speak?
Cawdrey: You know what she's like. Even after producing work of the most outstanding quality she thinks of some way to improve upon it at the last possible second
Doctor: She was always a perfectionist. [Opens a door] Up this way?
Cawdrey: Yes. [They start up the stairs] What's that you have there?
Doctor: Oh, I brought something to contribute in my own small way to the project's breadth of knowledge about English. It's an original edition of unusual, obscure, and preposterous words.
Cawdrey: A Time Lord gift? [They both chuckle]
Doctor: I sense that Osefa isn't the only one concerned that all goes well today?
Cawdrey: You are correct, sir. This conference represents a great deal of research and organization.
Doctor: And investment.
Cawdrey: I'm anxious, in other words, that our perfectionisms don't defeat us… It's along here.
Doctor: Ah, you're the patron of the Lexicon. I thought as much.
Cawdrey: The name Cawdrey features in the indices. Quite undeservedly, to be completely honest. I overview and underwrite the research but no ink on my fingers.
Doctor: But a great deal is riding on the dictionary being delivered. And because you are peripherally, if importantly, involved, you worry.
Cawdrey: That may be the definition of Symposiarch... Here we are.
Doctor: Ah.
Cawdrey: [calls through door] Osefa!

Scene – Inside Osefa's office

BOOK: I came back. You needed my help. I came back. And it was a momentary *lapsis lingui*. Nothing more. So I came back.

Cawdrey: [from outside office door] Professor! Professor!
BOOK: I keep coming back… to the same thing.
[Dematerializes.]

Scene – Outside Osefa's office

Doctor: Perhaps she's already left.
Cawdrey: [Jokingly] If there was something on the tip of her tongue and she simply had to get it out?
[He laughs clearly, The Doctor uneasily. Cawdrey clears his throat.]
Cawdrey: I have a key. [He tries to open the door.] Uhh! It's jammed.
Doctor: Let me. [The Doctor attempts to open door. Rattles handle.] No. No, something's blocking the entry. Stand clear.
[He pushes door until it bangs open. They go inside.]
Cawdrey: Osefa? I've someone to see you. Osefa?
Doctor: Oh, no!
Cawdrey: She's never… Can't you…?
Doctor: Too late. We're… too late!
Cawdrey: But it looks like—
Doctor: She did it herself….Suicide??

Scene – Elsewhere on campus

BOOK: I keep coming back to the same word. [To computer] Access random exemplary entry. [Beeping] 'English' Ennglissh. From Anglo-Saxon roots. Angle-ish. But that's a different 'ish.' A suffix connects to the word and connotes a sense of belonging. No, it's *ish* with a pause; it's more than a suffix. Or less. Not attaching to other words. Making meaning uncertain, approximate, not complete, not belonging. At an odd angle to the rest of the language…[Pages flutter, turn]… Angle-ish. Language of Angles? Orthography and Orthogany at odds. Parallel and divergent spellings. What is definition? What is precision? Is all this… Has all this ever been [Slams volume shut] anything other than a game?

Scene – back at the café

Peri: Periderm
Warren: Uh, um… perihelion
Peri: Pericarp!
Warren: Peri… cope. No, no, no, I've done that one…um, ah, peri… petia!
Peri: Perianth, pericycle, pericithium!
Warren: [Laughs] Oh, that's so unfair! [Imitates buzzer ending game] You win. How can I compete with all those botanical terms? [To server] Two pints, please.
Peri: It was my major in college… Is… Maybe.
Robot: Two pints. [Puts them down.]
Warren: Thanks. [To Peri] Shall we sit down again?
Peri: Sure. [They move towards seats.] Are you a student, Warren?
Warren: Me? I've done a few short courses at, well, all over the place. But I don't think there's one single area of study that covers all the words I want to use. [Pauses] What about the… friend you arrived with?
Peri: The Doctor? He's enjoying the conference. I'd tag along if I felt like another run through of [fakes pompous voice] 'The Story of English!'
Warren: [Laughs] I know the type. I've spent a lot of my life around academics as well.
Peri: The Doctor's not a…well, I suppose he *is* a scholar… in a way. He loves language. Which is great, but it blows poetic and pedantic at times. You, I can talk to like a normal person.
Warren: Words aren't for studying to death, and I do mean death. Scrawled on index cards inside some musty filing cabinet or, worse, online. No, words have to be out there, in use. Meaningful.

Peri: Words are meant to be spoken.
Warren: Yeah, but more than that. I reckon… oh, you're embarrassing me now, making me tell you all my pet theories. I reckon words are meant to speak through us.
Peri: Handy after a few drinks.
Warren: Or even… speak us into existence.
Peri: Do you believe that?
Warren: It's an interesting theory.
Peri: And… what are the words… telling you to do now?
Warren: [He laughs] Want to find out?
[Peri laughs in return, pleasantly.]

Scene – Osefa's office

Cawdrey: [in the background to unseen staff] Push the commencement back another hour…
Doctor: [to himself] Osefa, leaning partially against the only door into the scriptorium.
Cawdrey: [continues to talk rapidly and indistinctly in background, giving instructions.]
Doctor: … which was locked from the inside. Windows don't open. [Rattles them.] No large air-conditioning ducts, no signs of struggle other than a few papers in disarray.
Cawdrey: [to Doctor:] All I can say is… why?? Why would she do this thing? Doesn't make sense.
Doctor: [To himself] And a note. [To Cawdrey] When? When will violent death ever make sense? We only make what we can from that which surrounds it.
Cawdrey: Contextual definition. She was very big on that.
Doctor: Yes, about that. If I'm going to disturb the context of the scene like this, I'm wondering how long it's going to be before *you* inform the proper authorities. I think I'm referring here to what you might call the police.
Cawdrey: That's Osefa's handwriting.
Doctor: What else do you notice?
Cawdrey: Not her best penmanship. And the words are all a jumble. I put that down to the state of mind she was in. Was. I'm treating this as a problem of tenses.
Doctor: So might she have done. What did I say? Perfectionist. I've always known Osefa to be a stickler. Her *penchant* for clarity and correct usage bordered, on occasion, on the monomaniacal. Even if whatever reason something troubled her at her darkest moments would she…*could* she have made as many mistakes as that note contains?
Cawdrey: Spelling? Grammar? It's remarkable. She must have lost her head. Given all that away.
Doctor: Or she didn't write it.
Cawdrey: [Suddenly as if enlightened] Did you say the police? Oh! But what exactly are you implying?
Doctor: I don't know yet. But we've something to work from. Now, who was the last person to speak with Osefa?
Cawdrey: Me, I imagine. Have a put too much pressure on her lately, do you think? It's a lot of work designing a dictionary, but, well, she's *done* it. The Lexicon is ready to go. BOOK's up and running.
Doctor: BOOK?
Cawdrey: Oh, yes. He was around earlier. You… you don't think this was my fault, do you? The note doesn't mention me.
Doctor: [Thoughtfully] BOOK…

Scene – Out on campus

Warren: Yeah, BOOK. As in 'The.'
Peri: *The* Lexicon?
Warren: BOOK is its intelligence.
Peri: An artificial intelligence.
Both Peri and Warren: What other kind is there?
Warren: Like I say, intelligence operates through language and languages are learnt. We're all only constructed on the words we know.
Peri: No, no look! We got so busy constructing our words we forgot to pay for lunch! Warren, we've got to go back.
Warren: It's okay. I handled it.
Peri: Hmm? You just muttered something at the bar as we walked out.
Warren: You're not from the Articulate Worlds, are you? Paragraphs, sentences, declarations, even a single word has a value. We've got a genuine information economy.
Peri: Significance as a commodity? To coin a phrase…
Warren: How do you reckon a word nut like me survives?
Peri: You mean… all those 'peri' words we were saying.
Warren: No need for you to worry about getting credit from the refectory for a while yet. Anyway, BOOK.
Peri: Do you know him?
Warren: Let's just say I've read the reviews and I don't like what I hear. The faculty of language have this guy— he's fully sentient; we can call him a guy— trawling endlessly through the vast mass of all information, collecting every word and linking it implacably to every other one
Peri: That's how they're writing the dictionary, with electronic assistance. It must save time.
Warren: It saves the professors from putting in any actual effort, more like. Professor Osefa…
Peri: The Doctor mentioned her.
Warren: Ah yes, the glam grammar gran. She and the rest of the lexical research group do the conference circuit and it's all very agreeable. Very pleasant. Meanwhile BOOK has the hard grind. Just think about it. He has to go through every instance of language. Every text. Every recording, every citation, with no freedom. And for no reward.
Peri: The way you describe it, this Lexicon isn't the laudable achievement it's portrayed as.
Warren: It's a straightjacket on language and, more importantly, on BOOK. His contract leaves no room for interpretation. He's a slave to the faculty ordinatuers.
Peri: Ordinatuers?
Warren: [Gives a snort of disgust.] Computers! Pardon my French. BOOK's no better in the end than one of the entries he compiles.
Peri: But, if what you say is true, why does BOOK put up with it?
Warren: That, Peri, is what we're going to talk to him about. I want him to kick up a fuss. Mutiny against the minutiae.

Scene – A computer room in the conference center

Cawdrey: Osefa concentrated on the overall principals of design as she laid out in the prospectus. Quite a meticulous piece of work.
Doctor: But to complete the Lexicon by physical effort while maintaining the same attention to detail would have taken decades.
Cawdrey: And we needed the finished product rather sooner.
Doctor: Which is why the faculty assigned her an amanuensis.
Cawdrey: A hologlyph. Even someone as interested in precision as the Professor could use assistance at times.
Doctor: This BOOK fellow…
Cawdrey: With his aid we were able to bring the process of compilation to sufficient levels far quicker. It only remained for our team to verify the results, add a final gloss to the glossary. Doctor: Yes. A hologlyph. Able to materialize

and dematerialize at will. That deals with the ‘locked door’ problem.
Cawdrey: Eh? What’s he supposed to have done? Talked her to death?
Doctor: The ‘gift of the gab’ is only one possible technology a robot hologlyph might access and deploy.
Cawdrey: But it’s ridiculous!
Doctor: I know how it sounds. ‘Rouge hologlyph,’ indeed. Still, we can’t leave anything out at this stage. Now, let’s find BOOK so we can hear his side of the story. I’ll run a search program.
Cawdrey: Yes. We can follow the traces of his movements through the campuses.
Doctor: Hm…
Cawdrey: Suggesting BOOK as a suspect, though… I can imagine an AI turning against its creator. But against his research supervisor?
Doctor: It doesn’t explain the note, does it? And the police may well share your incredulity.
Cawdrey: This whole business is too awful. We can’t just call in the authorities. The letter of the law is a foreign alphabet here. It’s a matter of conflicting on and off campus jurisdictions.
Doctor: Oh, nothing at all to do with slightly dubious investment portfolios.
Cawdrey: [Annoyed.] Doctor, I have several hundred attendees not to panic.
Doctor: Very well. Give me full clearance to investigate *and* I want your word you’ll call in outside help if we can’t find the killer.
Cawdrey: It’s when you say things like that that I get worried. Killer? This is a terrible loss, but we can’t jump to conclusions, surely.
Doctor: Can’t we? If Osefa didn’t write the note, if she died by a hand other than her own, then her killer remains at large and, I’m willing to bet, still on campus.

Scene – BOOK’s office

Peri: Oh, there’s no one’s here
Warren: BOOK’s unavailable for student consultation at this time. Please come back during office hours. Assignments in the pigeon-hole down the hall, up the two flights of stairs, down the corridor and to the left, past the organics-only coffee lounge.
Peri: [laughs] It’s not huge. Kind of poky.
Warren: Typical faculty thinking. BOOK’s on the staff so give him an office. He’s not solid, so why bother with the breathing space?
Peri: Won’t you get into trouble for doing this?
Warren: For this? No. Ah, but for *this*…[He starts to work on BOOK’s office computer.] Let’s see. The great thing about hologlyphs, with the equipment. Everything’s accessible, unless you’re going to *sabot* the systems. Then it’s really easy.
Peri: Do you do this often?
Warren: What, break into minor academics’ rooms and pinch the coffee mugs?
Peri: Say you want to talk to someone and then interfere with their computer behind their backs.
Warren: It doesn’t have a back to be behind. At least not at the moment. Look, I’m just trying to get his attention.
Peri: Paging him…
Warren: Ah, take this page here. The morning’s work on definitions. Now, if we swap some of these around. Give him a little conundra.
Peri: Freshman high-jinx. This is just great, Warren.
Warren: Oh, come on. It’s the hypocrisy I’ve got a problem with, not BOOK. He’s not going to get upset, is he? That’s just a euphemism.
Peri: Yeah, I can think of a few myself.
Warren: Given time, I could even access his core programming. Get rid of the bits that keep him complacent. That’ll really give the Lexicon the trouble.
[Sharp, regular beeping begins from computer.]
Warren: Oh, *shibboleth*! Quick, under the desk.
[They hide. Sound of a hologlyph materializing. The beeping continues.]

BOOK: Door, lock. Whiteboard, erase. Ordinatuer, bring up recent usage.
[Beeping stops.]
Warren: [Whispers to Peri] We've got him where we want. Let's do something really daring. He can't hurt us.
Peri: [Whispers back] Then why are we hiding? This was a bad idea. Let's just say 'sorry' and leave.
BOOK: [to himself] The same words over and again. Without meaning.
Warren: [Still whispering to Peri] Yeah, we could do that… or we could kill him!
BOOK: More uncertainties. Does this call for more notes?
Warren: [Emerging from under desk and addressing BOOK] BOOK, uh, actions speak louder, you see, and—
Peri: [Sharply, warningly, as she too emerges.] Warren! [To the hologlyph] BOOK, I'm sorry. We weren't thinking.
BOOK: Weren't thinking? What are you doing in here? Why did you interfere with my work?… What makes you think you will get out of here alive?

[End-of-episode music plays]

Episode Two:

[Doctor Who theme music plays]

Scene – BOOK's office

Warren: Hey, we're trying to help!
BOOK: I demand… [Beeps, stutters uncertainly] an… ex… planation… for my behaviour…
Peri: Are you okay?
BOOK: Operating at… satisfactory capacitttyyy… Isn't that how hologlyphs talk?
Warren: Could you, um, could you unlock the door? Please?

Scene - A computer room in the conference building

Doctor: Ah, the search results are back… Nope… no…
Cawdrey: Any sign?
[The computer beeps and bops in the background, working]
Doctor: Not what we expected, that's for certain. Or perhaps not.
[He keys something into the computer.]
Cawdrey: It's incredible! The faculty have buffers to prevent system overloads.
Doctor: To stop smart-Alec B-lex undergraduates and their tutors the complete Oxford English?
Cawdrey: But it's as if they've all failed. Simultaneously! Ah, I must get on to information services at once.
Doctor: Well, it's not just data security you ought to be concerned about. Read here… and here… *and* here. [Warren gasps wordlessly.] Time and again the search failed, not due to intrusion from outside, but from what appears to be corruptions in the systems themselves.
Cawdrey: Diffuse across the entire campus? [The Doctor continues to work at the keyboard.] This is all I need! When the conference is just about to start and—
Doctor: No, it's not, is it?
Cawdrey: Doctor, I've had some thoughts. The manner of Osefa's death…
Doctor: I've gone over it again and again in my head. Perhaps there are some things best left indefinite.
Cawdrey: Then… what do we do with the body?
[Computer starts to make constant twilling noise.]
Doctor: [Distracted] Well, let's not worry about that just yet. [Computer falls silent] Aha! Ah, now! We didn't find BOOK. He has a vast mass of words in

which to get lost, but with the security systems down, I'm able, almost *invited* to access—
Cawdrey: BOOK's workspace! The software where he stores his recent work for verification.
Doctor: Not exactly word perfect, either.
Cawdrey: Full of more mistakes.
Doctor: Not like in the note, though. The errors are not quite as random. Could they be deliberate?… It's a puzzle.
Cawdrey: Do we have time for this?
Doctor: [Ignoring Cawdrey] Place that back over there…[Computer clicks, keystrokes] Those are anagrams, surely. This is like the *Times* crossword, um?… And the first letter of each word rearranged give us … 'WARREN?'
Cawdrey: Warren?
Doctor: Odd, that. The signature of whomever left us this conundrum?
Cawdrey: Not Warren! Not at *my* conference.
Doctor: Ah. Need I ask?
Cawdrey: If you've never met Warren, consider yourself, well, *literate*. He's a word-buster, a bricoleur, a guerrilla post-structuralist. You must have read about him in the scam-mags. [The Doctor makes an indeterminate negative sound; Cawdrey goes on.] He revels in word play. Would pass for nothing more that a gauche young man, but beneath it he's sick! He's evil!
Doctor: Evil? Well, I have a fairly broad understanding of the word, but really!
Cawdrey: His goal is to disrupt any and all linguistic study. Why, only last month he spoonerized the newsletter of the Proper Speaking Society! And he was the one who introduced the Profusion Virus into the gathering routines of the encyclopes, making their second volume too heavy for anyone to lift!
Doctor: Second volume? Oh, you mean the one covering DAL to —
Cawdrey: Yeah! He's caused more chaos in the verbal economy than we have the vocabulary to describe. Doctor: And he cunningly disguises this anarchism behind the name—
Cawdrey: Warren.
Doctor: Yes, I gathered. Well, if he has the computing skills he could have caused some of the problems we now face.
Cawdrey: With the security down, well, there's nothing to stop his— his—
Doctor: Dastardly deconstruction?
Cawdrey: [Affronted.] You're glib, Doctor, but he's dangerous. Warren has spread havoc and disorder against language and learning the length and breath of articulate space!

Scene – BOOK's office.

Peri: Are you done yet?
Warren: Yes. One more.
Peri: It was okay at first, but when you get to the really obscure ones like—
Warren: Feeg.
Peri: *That*.
BOOK: Feeg. Verb. Noun. Obsolete.
Peri: Okay, BOOK. Let's keep it that way. [To Warren] Warren, would you please leave the poor guy alone?
Warren: I'm trying to break him out of the conventional—
[A call tone is heard. PA comes on]
Cawdrey: [From speaker] Ahem! Would any [coughs] anyone in or around the conference not possessing an invitation from the Symposiarch please report to the offices of the faculty. Please. [PA switches off.]
Warren: Better see what that's about. Right.
Peri: Okay. Bye then! [Door closes behind Warren. Peri laughs uneasily and continues in a forced cheerful tone.] He's a really nice guy, you know.
BOOK: If that is your definition.
Peri: For a talking dictionary you make it hard for me to put in a good word. [Sighs.] You're right, though. All this talk about freedom of expression but what's

Warren *really* interested in? ‘Feeg!’
BOOK: I take it you do not require the definition of that particular lexeme.
Peri: No, thanks. But, hey, how many words do you have in the Lexicon?
BOOK: Hundreds of millions. The figure is counter-intuitive. Most people have only an active vocabulary of thousands.
Peri: If that.
BOOK: But, of necessity, my vocabulary expands continually, tending towards completion. Entries are maintained for words fallen out of fashion or common usage. For archaisms and other recondite turns of phrase. Account is taken of all variant and idiomatic spellings, capitalizations, hyphenations, and alternate alphabetical renderings. Then there are quasi-words, abbreviations, contractions, acronyms, and initialisms, compounds, back formations…
[His voice fades to distance in a fade-to-black.]

Scene – The main conference room.

[Cawdrey adjusts a mike and taps it to check it is on.]
Cawdrey: [Into mike] Hello! Y-yes, can—can you hear me at the back? It’s a pleasure to welcome you all to our symposium. [Applause begins.] Oh, thank you. Thank you. You all recognize me, I expect. I wrote the [Laughs nervously] T-the quite elaborate fiction you’ll find in your conference pamphlet. I’m afraid we won’t open with the keynote address from the professor of lexicography. Osefa’s, well, O-osefah has, uh—oh! S-she’s made way for our very special guest! May I present the well-known raconteur, that *bon vivant* of bornou, The Doctor! [Strong applause. Warren steps to the wings and speaks quietly to The Doctor.] Sorry.
Doctor: Thanks for warming them up for me. [Steps out to podium. Applause dies down as The Doctor begins.] Good afternoon, everybody…
[Fade-to-black].

Scene – BOOK’s office

BOOK: [Voice fades back in] …jargon, argot, vernacular, and double-speak, palaver, duplicatives, jabberwocky, and journalese, vogue words, slogans, and exclamations, folk etymologies and toponyms, nouns which become adjectives, which become verbs, and unparlimentary language, foreign borrowings in all directions, the vast mass and energy of scientific terms, accumulated as the language has spread outward with human expansion and discovery—
Peri: [Interrupting] Yeah, okay! [Sighs as if overwhelmed] It’s a lot for anyone to keep track of.
BOOK: My word, yes.
Peri: The thing is, I was always told that an artificial intelligence couldn’t ever truly understand language.
BOOK: That I am just a machine with a very complex set of syntax processing routines?
Peri: Yeah.
BOOK: That I put in a good performance of semantic comprehension, *but* beneath it I have no real awareness of what I am saying?
Peri: Yeah.
BOOK: [Significantly] I won’t tell if you don’t.

Scene – Main conference room.

Doctor: …he looked at me and said…‘Sausage?’ [Laughter] ‘Sausage?!’ and then he turned on his heel and stormed out! [More, harder laughter and then applause.] Thank you. I think we’ll enjoy a brief interval at this stage. Until then. [More applause, sustained as The Doctor moves to the wings. As he reaches its cover he sighs] Whew!
Cawdrey: Doctor?

Doctor: That ought to hold any difficult questions for a while.
Cawdrey: I've got people out trying to find Warren. When they do, though, just leave him to me.
Doctor: And what about the corruption on the ordinatures?
Cawdrey: I've had to have words with our sponsors.
Doctor: Sponsors? Huh! Just how commercial has the Lexicon become?
Cawdrey: A dictionary of everything is going to include everything, and I've always said that if the corporate bean-plexes would like to pay us to include their brands and trademarks …uh…the trouble is they've been among the sections of data to get eaten up in the firstswoosh of systems failure. I've received statements denying responsibility. And also Ritz.
Doctor: It's not logos we need to be think about, Cawdrey, it's *logos*. BOOK. That's who we need to talk to.
Cawdrey: He's not responding to being summoned, even when I use the polite protocols. But he can't leave the range of the faculty projectors. It won't be long before *he's* answering a few questions as well.

Scene – BOOK's office

Peri: Warren's been filling my head with all kinds of ideas about you. I- I don't want to seem rude, but maybe he's right. Are you under too much stress? You seem confused, and earlier you were actually threatening us.
BOOK: I don't remember. No. I don't know. When I try to think, other memories, other words keep moving in to block the moment.
Peri: I just wondered, that's all.
BOOK: It is a fair question. Lately, I have grown imprecise with regard to many subjects, which in my job doesn't help.
Peri: Maybe you'd better start at the beginning. And I don't mean 'aardvark.'

Scene –Osefa's office

Doctor: Tell me a little more about BOOK. Were we to be specific, we would call him and the Lexicon a corpus, wouldn't we? A vast databank of language.
Cawdrey: Yes. His function is to collect and arrange linguistic data, principally in dictionary form, but we're certainly interested in taking things further than that.
Doctor: Hopefully not too far. And this linguistic data, the words? Where do they come from?
Cawdrey: A wide variety of materials. Some not even out of copyright. Our special legal status gives us some leeway. Fiction, history. You might even find yourself mentioned in his sources.
[They open a door, go through, and close it behind them.]
Doctor: The clue might lie in those very sources. Well, until we can question our suspect or suspects we must build upon what we know. From our *corpus delecti.*
Cawdrey: How do you mean?
[A computer works and prints in the background.]
Doctor: By examining the available evidence.
Cawdrey: Available evidence? You can't mean… [Outraged] That's Osefa's body!
Doctor: Believe me, I'm not happy about it either.
Cawdrey: But it's…!
Doctor: It's evidence.
Cawdrey: Oh, dear.
Doctor: The Lexicon is the only part of your systems not yet suffering disruption. I was able to download the dictionary construction software, and added some enhancements of my own. Now…
Cawdrey: What are you doing?
Doctor: Something I've failed to talk myself out of.
[Turns on a scanner]

Cawdrey: You're scanning her. Doctor, with all due respect, I must use words of quite strong apprehension.
Doctor: [Scanner continues to run] In Osefa's species the brain possesses a strangely resilient hippocampus, which, given certain stimuli, can [sound of effort] recall recent memories for some time after death. In a neural network not at all unlike those of a projected artificial intelligence.
Cawdrey: Like a hologlyph?
Doctor: Ah, yes. If I am successful in maintaining the analogy, from those memories we can create an approximation of the self, a working definition, you might say.
Cawdrey: We might learned what happened from— [Sound of a hologlyph coming on.] OHHH!
Doctor: Osefa herself. Or, rather, a quasi-hologlyph of her.
Hologlyph Osefa: [Speaks unintelligibly] Oooook muumn ook? [Hiccup sound.] Ook… What are you doing? BOOK?
Cawdrey: No, it's me, Cawdrey.
Hologlyph Osefa: [In a blurry, unclear voice] What?
Cawdrey: And the Doctor. Remember him?
Hologlyph Osefa: Doctor? The Doctor? [Starts to weep.]
Doctor: [Comfortingly] Shhh, shh. Shh. Yes, it's me Osefa. Now, what else can you remember?

Scene – BOOK's office

BOOK: I am, quite literally, a walking dictionary. That is my function.
Peri: To troll endlessly to accumulate words.
BOOK: That's the bulk of my work, yes, but it's not all just armchair lexicography. Sometimes we travel to other worlds beyond the usual extension of my mental and projective capacities to collect those parts of language overlooked or forgotten.
Peri: Inactive vocabulary.
BOOK: Indeed. The faculty provides special dispensation for my taking these trips, under the professor's supervision.
Peri: And after you collect the words, what then?
BOOK: Store all data in linguistic corpus. Identify discrete verbal units. List pronunciation, definition, and contexts. Arrange into families, demonstrating history and etymology. Uplink complete entry to the lexicon.
Peri: I meant, what happens after you've collected everything? Words change all the time. New meanings, different people using them. You'll never be able to stop!
BOOK: Have to keep going. Keep going. Go faster… faster than the speed of meaning, faster than the meaning of the speed of meaning, always ahead of the changing contexts, but I always keep coming back to the same things. A word game without end.
Peri: A game…
BOOK: In which the only prize is another deferral of the entropy of language in which, for all our efforts to work against misunderstanding, there is always someone trying to jam the communication of someone else. I must concede Warren's point. I am, in many ways, a slave to my work. That is my function.
Peri: But are you happy?
BOOK: I feel like I am meant for nothing else. Which was the case until our most recent expedition…
[VO of Osefa as BOOK recalls the past venture. The voice of Osefa is of her hologlyph approximation so it seems she is telling her version of the story to The Doctor and Cawdrey in Osefa's office even as BOOK recounts his version to Peri in his office.]
Hologlyph Osefa: Sinocubus. A low technology planet in an unaspirated section of the Articulate Systems.
BOOK: [To Peri] An unremarkable world of unremembered words.
Hologlyph Osefa: [Still in VO] While I administered his remote projectors, BOOK

went about the collection, reading, monitoring frequencies, eavesdropping.
[Sound of footsteps, then BOOK's voice is heard over a communications link to Hologlyph Osefa.]
BOOK: Can't I just talk to the people?
Hologlyph Osefa: Well, you know the entries must arrive from as objective a position as possible. An impartial hand, remember.
BOOK: We can't risk contaminating such a pristine language community with our inadvertent neologisms. I know.
Hologlyph Osefa: Interaction is quite out of the question.
BOOK: But it's fascinating! In this culture people believe that 'In the beginning was the Word.' Or, rather, they don't.
Hologlyph Osefa: Some confusion of missionary linguistics and theoretical astrophysics.
BOOK: You're telling me. They say, after the very beginning but before the superheated-plasma of the early cosmos froze into the matter and background radiation we have today, in that epoch, space itself was dense enough to transmit sound.
Hologlyph Osefa: If there'd been anyone around to hear it.
BOOK: They say—imagine—patterns of energy left over from Event One converted into chaotic sonic oscillation, developing over colossal distances and hundreds of thousands of years, a soft rumbling building, *building* to a deepening roar, striving towards meaning!
Hologlyph Osefa: Hmmm. The 'birth cries of the universe?'
BOOK: They say. And of language. In space, you could have heard it scream.
Hologlyph Osefa: [VO resumes] It was a quite peculiar mythology. The locals held that all language…
BOOK: All of us.
Hologlyph Osefa: …are merely echoes…
BOOK: Derivations, corruptions.
Hologlyph Osefa: …of that first, vast Word. Holding it up as sacred, they pledged to keep alive its fragments, all that we've lost or dismissed as archaic. The ideal site for research.
[BOOK again addresses Hologlyph Osefa in a remembered exchange.]
BOOK: I've collected right to the fringes of the culture. The ragged edge. Literally. As far as language goes. And there…
Hologlyph Osefa: For the want of better words…
BOOK: Something collected… ME.
[Flashback ends. Back in BOOK's office.]
Peri: [urgently] What, BOOK? What was it?
BOOK: An… inexplicability.

Scene – Osefa's office

Doctor: What was it that BOOK encountered?
Hologlyph Osefa: Something we haven't yet explained. But we will. [Hologlyph Osefa now degenerates in speech] BOOK? Where are you
BOOK?…ook..ummook…[Becomes unintelligible and then falls silent.]
Doctor: We've learned all we can. [The hologlyph turns off.] Rest, old friend.
Cawdrey: Oof. I think I need to sit down.
Doctor: [Thoughtfully, to himself.] The birth cries of the universe…

Scene – BOOK's office.

Peri: It's okay BOOK. Take a moment.
BOOK: [Makes a sound as of relief.] It feels good…to have said all that.
Peri: But it takes a lot out of you. My stepfather used to take me on his expeditions, archeology trips, ecology assignments. Before we left I'd go to the library at NYU and read up on the specialist dictionaries, so I could impress him on the plane. And, yeah, it worked. It was just the everyday words which always

gave us trouble.
BOOK: [Mostly to himself.] Good. No, different.
Peri: Say, what's the hologlyph equivalent of a glass of water?… Oh. I could—
BOOK: [Groans as if in pain.]
Peri: No? [Clicks tongue] Words, words, words. It's all about words. It's a shame we can't just look up 'inexplicability' and… oh! I haven't even asked. How is someone supposed to use the dictionary?
BOOK: A *dictionarium* literally means a collection of dictions, of sayings. There is provision for conventional alphabetized access, but Osefa intended the entries be primarily accessible through spoken request. As Warren was keen to demonstrate.
Peri: People come and ask for the words they're after.
BOOK: I'm not carted around by a fleet of lorries. The last few centuries have seen the market flooded with many perfectly adequate, if increasingly specialized texts. But our Lexicon is the only one to preserve the sense of presence. The words *alive*.
Peri: And this causes problems. Because you're just one guy and, even if you weren't forgetting events, which is a whole other thing, surely you're too busy keeping the Lexicon up-to-date to handle requests.
BOOK: The solution to that one was Osefa's genius.
Peri: Was?
BOOK: An interface has been opened between the real world and the space of the vocabulary. From this meeting-point the dictionary can be used without the requirement of my intermediacy. Presenting the Lexisphere to the conference would have been Osefa's crowning career achievement.
Peri: Osefa's… not the issue right now. You met this something-that-collected-you while you were actively collecting words, right?
BOOK: You imply that I entered the inexplicability into the Lexicon, but it is impossible. By definition.
Peri: Are you sure of that? Listen, we both need to get out of this basement. Let's say you take me to this Lexisphere.

Scene – Osefa's office

[Papers rustle as The Doctor searches.]
Cawdrey: We've been through all this material.
Doctor: But now, Cawdrey, we work from a new understanding. New context, new meanings.
Cawdrey: Well, why didn't we just ask her hologlyph who, er, what happened?
Doctor: It proved too difficult, I believe, for Osefa to face the moment of her own death. Even English has its limits. But she must have been trying to point us in the right direction. A cross-reference, a footnote…[Papers continue to be searched] Anything might become useful.
Cawdrey: Oh, here's her log from the Sinocubus trip.
Doctor: Ah. We must commit ourselves to think with the same deductive clarity that she was blessed to exhibit.
Cawdrey: Approach this carefully, following 'the pure logic of semantics.' I hosted her last book launch and wine-and-cheese affair.
Doctor: [Reading the notes.] Ah! Here in the field trip notes. Several times she uses the abbreviation L.T. Here: 'Nearing a breakthrough in LT'…'Investigate LT mytho-poesis.'
Cawdrey: [Pondering] Hmm.
Doctor: Of course! Ach! L.T.! Lexical transcendence!
Cawdrey: [Aghast.] She never mentioned *that* on her grant application!
Doctor: Well, her notes mention it often enough. Look.
Cawdrey: You-you mean to say that all this time she was using faculty— and private— funding for something out of [sputters as if unable to continue for disbelief]… recreational linguistics?!
Doctor: Ohh—
Cawdrey: Transcendentalism? Well, that's lunatic fringe stuff! Not even Warren

would bother.
Doctor: Oh, steady on. It was, after all her job to busy herself in tracing the original. And that story she told. What exactly was it that defied their consideration? [Slaps down notebook.] Perhaps there's more about this in the Lexicon.
Cawdrey: Good luck trying to access it again.
Doctor: Yes. Access…
Cawdrey: I can't credit any of this. One minute we're talking about Osefa's analytical genius, the next she turns out to have abandoned her professional responsibilities.
Doctor: Well, as a professional, Osefa would have wanted to present her researches. *Being* Osefa, she would have done so in an idiosyncratic way. Not for her the exigencies of online catalogs. *She'd* have created another, more dedicated access portal.
Cawdrey: The Lexisphere!
Doctor: [As if to say 'you've got it.'] Ah.

Scene – the Lexisphere

Peri: [Her voice echoing in the vast space.] So…that's the Lexisphere. Right?
BOOK: It is a particle accelerator for meaning. Speaking metaphorically. It isolates words. Breaks them down into their constituent morphemes, measures etymological attractions, and compares quanta of signifigence.
[The Lexisphere beeps and hums quietly in the background.]
Peri: [With awed comprehension.] It's your mind. People go in there— the Lexisphere— into your memory. Oh, isn't that weird?
BOOK: I've… never thought of it like that. Until today I have never entered this building by the front door. But now, yes, there is a sense of… disconnection.
Peri: More than simple absentmindedness.
BOOK: [Dazedly] I—uh
Peri: Maybe it is absentmindedness. Sorry. Go on.
BOOK: Sections of vocabulary receive from easy access, a game of verbal hide and seek, except before I can count to a hundred, the words for the numbers have changed. Precision has come to mean impossibility.
Peri: BOOK, I want to help you, but I need to understand. You're saying the Lexisphere siphons away part of yourself?
BOOK: Which is its function. But it feels… wrong.
Peri: There's something else to this. It's in there. In the Lexisphere.

Scene – Osefa's office

Doctor: A recent addition to the campus architecture oughtn't be too difficult to find.
Cawdrey: No! I cannot grant you access to the Lexisphere!
Doctor: Oh!
Cawdrey: The conference has been disrupted enough.
Doctor: Oh, Cawdrey, think! We know BOOK was with Osefa quite soon before or possibly even during her death. Where, then would he be likely to go than his own memory? In one sense it's returning to the scene of the crime.
Cawdrey: Doctor! Doctor, you're helping and I am indescribably grateful for your assistance [The Doctor makes a surprised, pleased sound.] But the official presentation of the Lexicon must and will remain the conference closer!
Doctor: Ending on something big?

Scene – The Lexisphere

[A strange rumbling is heard.]
Peri: What is that?… BOOK?… [BOOK is nowhere to be seen.] Okay. I'll check for myself. [The rumbling intensifies as Peri goes through a door and nears its

source.] BOOK? Are you all right out there?
BOOK: Ish.
Peri: BOOK? [There is a clanking and a rush as the door closes.] BOOK! BOOK! [She runs.] BOOK!!

Scene – Conference center

Cawdrey: Doctor, please. It's not just for the shareholders' sakes. This is Osefa's work we're talking about.
Doctor: And she might not appreciate someone using it to satisfy their own sense of academic theatrics.
Man: Excuse me. Excuse me, what's going on? We waited nearly an hour in there.
Cawdrey: We've met with a few difficulties. Nothing serious, I can assure you.
Man: Will proceedings resume at any time in the near future?
Cawdrey: It won't be long now.

Scene – The Lexisphere

[Rumbling continues.]
Peri: Yelling over rumble. Distressed, almost paniced.] BOOK! Let me out!
Ish: Ish! Ishh! Ishh! Ishh! [The S's and H's hiss strangely.] Ish! Ish! Ish! Ish!

Scene – Main conference room

[There is a babble of irate voices.]
Doctor: Listen, why don't we all go back inside and I'll tell you about the time…
Man: Enough of this endless deferral! We paid our registration fees. Give us a real answer.
Cawdrey: We're attempting to do just that but it's— [Cawdrey's communicator sounds.] Oh, excuse me. [Into device.] Hello? Ish: Ish!
Cawdrey: Hello? Hello? [Makes disgusted noise and hangs up communicator.] As I was trying to get across…
Man: Ish!
Doctor: Ish?
Cawdrey: Doctor?
Man: Ish!
Doctor: Ish??
Another man: Ish!
Conference attendees: [First in scattered bursts, then converging into a concerted chant] Ish! Ish! Ish! Ish…!

Episode Three

[Doctor Who theme music plays.]

Scene – The Lexisphere

Ish: Issssh! Issssssh! [The Ish continue to hiss *ish!* with almost a rattle at the end throughout the dialogue.]
Peri: Let me out!
[Banging on door. Door hisses open to reveal Warren.]
Warren: Peri? [Sighs with relief on seeing her.] Is it just me or have things turned pleonastic?
Ish: Issh! Issh!
Peri: What?… Warren, we've got to get out of here!
Warren: Yes. Come on! Hurry while there's still time.

Ish: Issh! Issh!
[The door opens and closes once again as Peri and Warren flee.]

Scene – Outer section of the Lexisphere.

BOOK: Ish, ish, ish,

Doctor: Also responsible for the corruption in the systems?
Cawdrey: With Warren's sticky fingerprints all over it! I thought he'd get up to some antics, as per usual, but *this*…
Doctor: You don't think he's up to it?
Cawdrey: It's worse than anything he's done before. Warren's only ever challenged the idea of linguistic structure and study. But if he found a way to take it further… yes, he *would* do it. He doesn't care about anything.

Scene – Outside the Lexisphere

[Both Peri and Warren are gasping with the effort of running.]
Warren: Yes! That was great!!
Peri: Great!
Warren: Ha, ha, ha!
Peri: [With uncertain enthusiasm.] Great… Wait… Great!!
Warren: I never felt so *real* before! In the Lexisphere it was like— I— I don't know what!! [Becoming inarticulate with joy.] Like nothing I've ever felt before! Or something I've always needed to! Wooo-hoo-hoo-hoo!!!! Yes!!!!!!
Peri: Warren, you were only in the Lexisphere a few seconds. Let me tell you, it's not something you want to repeat.
Warren: Peri, listen. I like words. Of course I'm not going to pass up the chance to try out the latest lexicon.
Peri: It's dangerous! There was something in there… a, uh, *presence*!
Warren: Yes. That's it. A Prescience. I'm sorry, I've just got to find out.
Peri: You saw… you heard BOOK. Something's done something to him already. Let's— let's just find The Doctor. He'll know what to make of all this.
Warren: The Doctor. Okay. Where is he then?
Peri: W-well, last I saw, he was with the Symposiarch, Robert Cawdrey.
Warren: [With incredulous disdain.] Bob? I think I'll take my chances… [Starts to exclaim and laugh with hysterical delight as he runs back towards the Lexisphere.] Woo-hoo! Waa-ha-ha!
Peri: Warren? Warren! Oh…

Scene – Somewhere

BOOK: The note was discovered among the professor's effects shortly after her death… Shortly before that...event, I read what she had written. Saw what she had been driven to.
Hologlyph Osefah: Forgive me [Static] Forgive me…a…[Static] construct some meaning [Static.] from these notes. [Static] couldn't go on [Static] Words cannot be killed. [Static] We defy our ignorance. [Static] Let me finish. [Static] Let me finish…
BOOK: And when I had read the note, I began to correct it. What else could I do?
Hologlyph Osefah: Forgive me a brief indulgence, those of you gathered here whom I am not merely obliged but please to acknowledge before I attempt to construct some meaning from these chaotic notes. Pause for laughter. I couldn't go on without thanking my colleagues in the faculty, the assembled syndics, etcetera, etcetera as listed. First anecdote. Ours would be the complete lexicon but our ancestors they lacked the technology of continual expansion, the limitations of the collecting media required lexicographers to make room for more entries by removing old ones. They became word-killers. But words cannot be killed, gentlemen. Make no mistake. We defy their ignorance. [Chuckles.] No, no, no, let me finish.
BOOK: …and corrected it.
Hologlyph Osefah: Forgive me a [Static.] Forgive me a brief [Static] Construct some meaning from these [Static] Forgive me a [Static.]
BOOK: …and corrected it.
Hologlyph Osefah: Make no mistake…[Static] chaotic notes…[Static] I couldn't

go on [Static] Let me finish. [Static] Let me finish. Let me finish. [Chuckles. A few more words are spoken but they are lost in a long burst of static.]

Scene – Main conference room

Doctor: In here. [Herds conference attendees into the lecture hall.] At least we know what to do with you all.
Man: Ish
Doctor: You know, I'd never have guessed. [A communicator sounds. With a sigh, The Doctor answers it.] Cawdrey? Have you found anyone unaffected yet?
Cawdrey: No one! Not in the libraries, nor the other faculties. Blanket catatonia! Student dormitories are even worse. Well, that's to be expected, I suppose.
Doctor: Do you think we might require outside assistance yet?
Cawdrey: I can't get a good outside line. Too much interference in the network. I got through long enough to let them know about the — the affliction, but I believe the operator thought I was… affected as well.
Doctor: So it's not spread beyond campus yet. Good. We'll just have to handle this ourselves.
Cawdrey: [Incredulous] The two of us? We can't provide medical attention to all of them!
Doctor: No, but I don't think need concern ourselves unduly in that department. It's a purely mental breakdown. Sit the attendees comfortably and they're fine. Although how long we have until neural atrophy sets in, I cannot say.
Cawdrey: I think I know how they feel.
Doctor: It targets the language centers of the brain…or brains or brain equivalents. The key word unlocking some atavistic, pre-linguistic response?… No. That explanation went out with—
Cawdrey: Doctor, this insanity is spreading!

Scene – Library foyer

Cawdrey: [Still on the communicator with The Doctor.] I'm just leaving the library. Pages of textbooks are spilling out over the floor. [A crash] Oh! Covered in nonsense verse! The translation systems have begun talking in tongues, and the attendee register for the conference, which I personally checked three times, has—has [almost unable to speak for horror] *typos!!!*
[Back on The Doctor's end of the communicator. The attendees continue to mutter in the background.]
Doctor: Stay calm! Linguistics is a science. Let's approach this rationally.
Cawdrey: A good thing the delegates are like this really. If Lord Launty saw that he'd become quite apoplectic.
Doctor: Cawdrey, focus.
Cawdrey: We still have a dead body to deal with. [There is the sound of books thumping to the floor at rapid, irregular intervals.] How do we fit that into our rational explanation?
Doctor: I don't know. Review the materials. Ascertain their meaning. It's quite straightforward.
[Back in the library, still with books tumbling frequently.]
Cawdrey: Is it? I've got Osefah's note with me here.
Doctor: What about it?
Cawdrey: It's changing! The words are shifting around the page; the punctuation marks are flipping back and forth like some kind of —, I don't know, illogic diagram?
Doctor: It's mocking us. We're up against a far more formidable adversary than I thought, Cawdrey. Continue searching for anyone or anything not yet affected. Warren, BOOK… [suddenly seeing Peri enter.] Peri! I have to go, Cawdrey. [He hangs up and clunks down the phone.]
Peri: Doctor!
Doctor: She sells seashells by the sea shore.

Peri: Uh, sure. She sells shells, but seashells? I'm not so sure.
Doctor: Humor. An excellent defense mechanism. Hello, Peri. I'm pleased to see your language faculties haven't given up the *gist*.
Peri: Like these poor people.
Doctor: I resisted infection, naturally. Could some of my innate ability to resist have rubbed off on you?
Peri: [Snorts as if to say 'are you kidding me?' then turns to the attendees.] What's happened to these guys? Can't we do something for them?
Doctor: Not until we know exactly what we're up against. But have a listen, see what you think. [Opens door to main conference room.]
Attendees: [in scattered gabbling] ish, ish, ish, ish…
Peri: All they can say is *ish*. [The Doctor closes the door again.]
Doctor: Were you ever struck, out of the blue, to wonder why you use a particular word to mean whatever it happens to mean? I'm sure you know your grammar, understand the processes by which language operates and evolves, but none of that ever *quite* explains why that word fits that thing.
Peri: It gets to irritate you after a while and you start repeating the word in your head…
Doctor: Or out loud
Peri: Trying to puzzle out the meaning, like there must be more to it.
Doctor: And what happens?
Peri: It's strange. As you repeat it y-you seem to get farther away from understanding the word it starts not to mean anything at all. It becomes just sounds. Babble.
Doctor: Yes. Something is causing these people to do just that. Repeat without meaning. They've lost any distinction between sound pattern and signification. Without those basics of language their minds are unable to cope and simply switch off.
[Pause. The attendees can still be heard babbling *ish* from the next room.]
Peri: That's horrible.
Doctor: Let's get some fresh air.

Scene – The Lexisphere

BOOK: Ish… ish… ish? Osefah? She keeps coming back to the same thing… in my head… in my head… Osefah…
Warren: [Very muffled and distant through the heavy door.] No, BOOK, it's me, Warren. *Warren.*
BOOK: [To himself] There are more obscure usages of ish. One, a verb, signifies to make an egress or departure from or to clear out a place, hence ishing is synonymous with issuing, as in ishing out of.
Warren: [Still muffled.] Get a hold out yourself. I need you to help me with the Lexisphere.
BOOK: [Still unheeding of Warren] For example… [Dematerializes.]
Warren: I think there's a word for what I'm feeling at the moment… Ishhhh!!!

Scene – outside the conference building

Doctor: That is how this thing is spreading, through whatever it can find: spoken, written, otherwise recorded. Through language. Destroying it in the process.
Peri: But why 'ish?' Does it mean anything?
Doctor: Well, etymologically speaking, that babble is an insufferable susurration of suffixes. Ah, perhaps it doesn't matter what they're saying but rather what they ***can't***. Just imagine it — a lifetime of vocabulary, of rich and complex significance whittled away without you even knowing it. Peri: Listen, Doctor. What if we went back to the— the [as if unable to locate the word wanted.] tuh
Doctor: No, leave that blue box, or whatever it might be, alone. We have work to do.
Peri: The students on the lawn! [Points] It's like a nightmare. It's like what

happened to BOOK. *Just* like what happened to BOOK.
Doctor: BOOK? You've met him?
Peri: He's in trouble! Well, Warren went back to the Lexisphere, but I don't think it was to help.
Doctor: Warren! Why didn't you say so? [Sighs in exasperation.] It's what not being said that matters.

Scene –

Cawdrey: Warren. BOOK. Uh, Warren. BOOK. [Spotting Warren.] Warren! Ah!
Warren: [Uncertainly] Hi, then.
Cawdrey: Hello. Um. How are you?
Warren: You know. [Very quietly goes on] Ish. [In a normal tone.] I'm all right.
Cawdrey: What?
Warren: Fine.
Cawdrey: Oh. [Pause. Then stuttering, tripping over his words.] Do you still like c-c-cryptograms? T-the other day I-I came across some interesting—
Warren: Uh, I-I was just on my way, so… I'll be off then, yeah?
Cawdrey: Yes. Yes, of course. Take care.
Warren: Yeah. See you later

Scene – back outside the conference center.

Peri: He wouldn't listen. Said he felt something. I just felt like getting out of there as fast as possible.
Doctor: I don't blame you. From what you've told me— [breaks off, then continues] Do you hear that Peri?
[She harkens silently a moment. There is no sound.]
Peri: There isn't any… birdsong.
Doctor: But you were right. There wasn't any a moment ago. I said it was spreading through all languages, but the buildings are still standing and architecture is a language of sorts, as are clothing and gesture. Even reality is a form of discourse.
Peri: But the sparrows?
Doctor: It's attempted to take them over. But only some ways of communicating suit its purposes. Or porpoises. Dolphins have a language too, you know.
Peri: [Slightly exasperated] Doctor!
Doctor: I'm trying to think about the appropriate metaphor. What if we were to— yes! Stop seeing the university as a *place*.
Peri: O-*kaay*…
Doctor: No, *try*! Instead, imagine the campus as a book. The main text, the conference, is somehow more relative the situation than the illustrative and background details, like the sparrows.
Peri: What kind of text are we imagining?
Doctor: A multi-lingual phrasebook. This whatever-it-is-we're-dealing-with is leafing through the book of the campus. [Thoughtfully] Looking for something specific. But what if the entry sought is larger than the dictionary itself?
Peri: How can something be bigger than it is… [realizes what she is saying] on the inside… This is all about the inexplicability BOOK found on that planet, isn't it?
Doctor: I believe it is. The details, BOOK and Osefah's stories, that rumble you heard, everything resonates with the legends of lexical transcendentalism.

Scene – Lexisphere

[Sound of a hologlyph coming on]
BOOK: What's another word for…?
[Another hologlyph activates beside BOOK.]
Hologlyph Osefah: Ah, BOOK. There you are.

BOOK: Osefah!
Hologlyph Osefah: I can't for the life of me find my lecture notes and what's this nonsense you've got here? This isn't the preamble I asked you to check!
BOOK: I ran through it but then— [realizes what he is seeing] Osefah! Is it really you?
Hologlyph Osefah: Oh, never mind, I'll just have to skip that part. Now, where was I? [Pause] Ah, this is a good bit. 'A transcendental number such as pi can only be approximated since it is impossible to write down as a finite or repeating sequence of digits. What, then, could we consider a transcendental word? How might we start to approximate it?'
BOOK: [Pained and disappointed.] You're not her. You're not Osefah…

Peri: Lexical transcendentalism?
Doctor: The study of and necessarily the search for the mythical longest word in the cosmos.
Peri: So what?
Doctor: *So* indeed, Peri. *So* is a very short word, but the dictionary provides for it dozens of distinct meanings, where as a much longer word
like honorificabilitudinitatibus…
Peri: … Not so many.
Doctor: Well, I can only think of three, offhand. The argument goes that the longer a word, the less often that word is used and therefore the more precisely focused its range of meanings. Are you with me?
Peri: So-so.
Doctor: Well, extend the length of the word to infinity, as the transcendentalists theorize, and, well, no one *knows* what it means.
Peri: [melodramatically] Say it ain't so!
Doctor: Peri, this is serious.
Peri: So sorry.
Doctor: [Jokingly grave] Don't be such a so-and-so. [Goes on] Most likely, the longest word, which is known by the ostentatiously Latinate name of the Omniverbum, exists as a sort of singularity of significance. In its presence, meaning itself would warp and collapse.
Peri: And let me guess, no one who's found the Omniverbum has ever lived to tell of it.
Doctor: I'm not saying no.
Peri: But… almost by accident, that's what BOOK and Osefah did! They found the longest word and all this craziness is the result. That is, assuming I get you right and this thing is alive?
Doctor: Alive. Waiting to be revived. Does it matter? Umm. I-I can't shake the feeling we're dealing with something different. Perhaps not the Omniverbum itself, but part of it? An echo, a surviving fragment? An *ish*, shall we say?
Peri: There's Cawdrey!
[Cawdrey hurries up to them, gasping between words with exertion.]
Cawdrey: Peri! Doctor! You're both still all right?
Peri: So to speak.
Doctor: [To Cawdrey] Did you find anybody else?
Peri: Uh, no. Uh, no one at all. [Laughs nervously.]
Doctor: Then this is how it's going to be. Peri, I think you may be onto something… and we have a name for our adversary now. That always helps.
Cawdrey: A name?
Peri: The Ish.
Doctor: And we shall know this word by the company it keeps. [To Peri] I want you to accompany the Symposiarch back to the Lexisphere and then have him show you how to shut it down.
Peri: Okay.
Cawdrey: [Outraged] Now hold on a minute!
Doctor: Cawdrey, it's long past time for protests. The Lexisphere is merely another way for the Ish to wreak havoc and we cannot give our interloping interlocutor any advantages. But take these. [Removes two small devices from

his pocket.]
Cawdrey: Another device?
Peri: Transgalactic Babelmasters.
Cawdrey: Huh?
Peri: Don't ask me how I know.
Doctor: The earpiece fits [fits the 'earbuds' in Peri's ears] like that, yes. Peri, I usually disapprove of censorship but—
Cawdrey: [Still angry] What's this in aid of?
Doctor: Well, we can't guarantee our immunity against [hesitates] the problem we're facing… will last. The earpieces will filter out any instances of you-know-what that attempt to assail you and provoke repetition.
Peri: You mean, if we try to say * [A beep is heard.] Oh!
Doctor: Good. Now, on your way.
Peri: But where are you going?
Doctor: I've got another booking…

Scene – main conference room

Attendees: [In random, scattered babbling] Ish. Ish. Ish.
[Sound of a hologlyph appearing]
Hologlyph Osefah: [Softly to herself] Project. [Clears throat noisily] Good evening. Shall we get things underway?

Scene – The Lexisphere

[The computers hum and beep quietly throughout the scene.]
Peri: Okay, how do we work these computers, Cawdrey?
Cawdrey: [Distracted] What?
Peri: Shutting down the Lexisphere. How do we do it? To stop the *!
Cawdrey: How can a word be alive in any case? It's silly!
Peri: [Exasperated] Oh, what are you asking? How can a word be meaningful? How can it affect other living things in the world around it? Listen, I don't understand it either, but if The Doctor said so then—
Cawdrey: Words are my life! My entire working life! I trade in words. They made my fortune and never, not *once*, did one leap off a page and hijack my brain!
Peri: Bob, forget all that, okay? Help me with these.
Cawdrey: Oh.
Peri: [Makes a disgusted sound.] Oh, I'll do it myself.
[There is the sound of banging and rattling as Peri removes some panels. Then there is the sizzle of released electricity.]
Peri: Oww!!!
Cawdrey: Peri!
Peri: [Pants] There. [Cawdrey draws near to examine the exposed equipment.] No! No, we shouldn't look!
Cawdrey: On the monitor… Words shifting… into new words. The same word again and again…
Peri: Don't look!
Cawdrey: Uh? Oh! [Breaks away from his dreamy speech as if shaking off a force.] Oh.
Peri: We're protected against hearing the *, but we haven't got a device to block out our vision.
Cawdrey: [Still gasping as if recovering from a blow] Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Peri.
Peri: [Sighs] You don't have to believe it's alive, but it *is* trying to stop us.
Cawdrey: The *? But we've not been affected. We're still *un*affected.
Peri: Not for the first time I'm wondering why that actually is.

Scene – Osefah's office

Doctor: Why, Osefah. That's what I still cannot understand about this whole misadventure. Yours was a command of the language, an appreciation of its depths like no other. Why wasn't that enough? What drew you to the Omniverbum?
BOOK: How could you complete the Lexicon without it?
Doctor: [Surprised] BOOK? [Pause] I'm the Doctor.
BOOK: We haven't met in person. But then, how could we? Immaterial and material hands do not shake, but I recognize you nonetheless. I have met your words before…
Doctor: I suspected that you would return here. Like tracing the etymology of a word, you came back. Back to where it really all started. The scene of the sign.
BOOK: She held no truck with the principal that we should define an entry using other words simpler than itself. 'A concession to generality makes too great a sacrifice of eloquence. When we find a word that goes beyond our description, BOOK, we will have discovered the soul of the language, worth preserving simply because it exists.' [Pause.] I miss her. Very much.
Doctor: BOOK, we have gone beyond description today. Can you help us work out what the Ish means? What did you an Osefah learn about the Omniverbum?
BOOK: Omniverbum? Nothing. Instead of the original and ultimate word, all we uncovered was the hollowness behind language itself.
[The door creaks open and Warren enters, laughing with evil sarcasm.]
Warren: Except the professor learned that just a little too late, yes?
BOOK: [To the air] Osefah. Osefah. Ish.
Doctor: BOOK? W-what does he mean? BOOK?
[For answer, BOOK begins a playback of a past meeting with Osefah]
BOOK: … a clitic suffix creating adjectival forms and subjoined—
Hologlyph Osefah: [Annoyed, cutting across his words] Please, BOOK, I'm trying to…
BOOK: to form a noun—
Hologlyph Osefah: [Huffs] Off!
[Sound of BOOK deactivating.]
Hologlyph Osefah: [Sighs.] Time to work. No time at all. Oh, I told BOOK to check this. Right, I must do it myself. Yes. Fine. Oh, for crying out loud! Such an obvious…! [Sighs again.] I really am working too hard. Let me think. What's another word for…
[The playback clicks ahead to another scene, later, but still in the past.]
BOOK: Ish.
Hologlyph Osefah: Be quiet, BOOK.
BOOK: Ish.
Hologlyph Osefah: I am trying to work. Please, if you do not shut up, then I shall— M-my-my notes! H-have you done something? [Starts to sound panicked] BOOK? [She starts to weep as she turns over the pages in her hands and sees devastation.] The research! T-the notes! It is ruined!! I-is it all ruined?? [Horrified pause] I can't tell.
[Back in the present]
BOOK: No more descriptions.
Doctor: Ah, we've heard enough. Osefah committed suicide after all. Rather than face that specific nightmare of the lexicographer, utter meaninglessness.
Warren: [Snidely] And the suicide note wrote itself? Convenient.
Doctor: [With a fed-up huff] Warren, is it? Oh, what do you want?
Warren: No one understands. Osefah didn't. BOOK doesn't. You certainly don't. But it's obvious. [Fake-sweetly] Isn't it completely obvious? The Ish—top marks for naming your adversaries, by the way, Doctor— the Ish isn't something to mope about and kill yourself over. It's the future. [Dropping to a crazed whisper] It's something to live!!

Scene – The Lexisphere.

Cawdrey: The * has left us alone. [Peri types as he speaks.]
Peri: Cawdrey. Come on, you know these machines. You wouldn't invest in

something you hadn't any knowledge about.
Cawdrey: Ha!
Peri: Oh, but it's true, isn't it? If you could get into the wiring and cut off the—[clunk] No, these panels don't come away!
Cawdrey: Don't you w* sometimes you could go back and undo your mistakes? Spell-check your life?
Peri: Look, what if you closed you eyes and-and, even without the words in the right place, you know how these controls should be laid out. [Raising her voice for force] You can still try, can't you?
Cawdrey: Instead of admon*ment, and *fic *tushing, w-we could have gone f*ing and then had a Swed* meal!
Peri: Oh, you're a great help, you know that?
Cawdrey: s*kabob, or kit*kus and all that k*kabbible…m* mash! [Becoming panicked] Peri, I d-don't know half these words!…Holidays to *kinoff and-and *napore and an indi*nity with the b*num [He speaks faster and faster and his words degenerate into babble] unless Kr*ner and V*ner are more suff*ently aud*ned!! **Aggh!
Peri: Cawdrey! Calm down!
Cawdrey: [Gives a sob]
Peri: And from now on let's just not use any words with that particular syllable in them.
Cawdrey: Yes. Y-yes, you're q-quite right.
Peri: [Sighs.] Now. [Laugh-sniffles, then starts the beginnings of a sneeze] Ah-ah-ah…
Cawdrey: Oh, here, have a hanky.
Peri: [Gasps] Thanks. [Blows nose loudly.] Oh.
Cawdrey: [Nervously.] We have to stay calm. Concentrate. We. Are not. Affected.
Peri: [Sneezes] At*hoo!

Scene – In Osefah's office

Doctor: Well, that's your dream? Everyone succumbing to the Ish?
Warren: Not 'succumbing to,' 'playing with.' Words playing games with *us*. We won't need faculties or universities or Articulate Worlds any longer. No more, 'write it this way.' The end of the stranglehold of certainty.
Doctor: No more bedtime stories? No more poetry? No one able to speak to another! Words never spoken, only ever repeated?
Warren: Free-flowing dissemination of meaning! Unlimited semiosis!!
Doctor: [Snort of derision] Oh, and how do you propose to achieve that? [Accusingly] BOOK, are you helping him?
BOOK: I… Ish. I…
Warren: BOOK's enabled the Ish to occupy the mental spaces of this campus, but we're going to spread it further. [Becoming maniacal] Much further! A thousand projections! Everyone can have a pocket lexicon.
Doctor: There'll be no pocket books after the verbal economy collapses.
Warren: But who will care?! Eventually, everyone gives in to the Ish. [The Doctor makes a pained sound, but Warren goes on.] No matter what else you've put in their ear.
Doctor: What?… Peri!
Warren: [Coldly] Your devices won't make any difference. Every dictionary ever written was a monster. A monument. An authority at the center of its linguistic empire. But now the colonials are speaking their own language.
Doctor: Their own language? Well, if you consider 'ish ish ish' some new variation of sparkling after-dinner repartee, you're as senseless as the Ish itself!
Warren: Peri was right; you talk too much.
Doctor: Oh!
Warren: Come on BOOK, we've got a speaking tour to conduct on the subject of 'Making Conditions Conducive to the Ish.' And, after that…
Doctor: The Omniverbum? You insane, stupid boy!

Warren: [Laughs insanely]
Doctor: Don't you have the faintest comprehension of what's at stake here?
Warren: Yes. A lexicographer's lackey is going to bring about the disarticulation of all language! [Gives an even more villainous laugh] But can't you appreciate the irony? [Laughs some more.]

End of Episode music plays

Episode Four:

[Opening music plays]

Scene – Osefah's office

Voice: OSEFAH!!!!
[Sound of a hologlyph coming on. Hologlyph Osefah appears mid-sentence just as she had been speaking at the podium.]
Hologlyph Osefah: …and I would also like to thank — [startled] Oh! BOOK!
Warren: Professor Osefah! Oh I've so looked forward to meeting you for such a long time. The Ish… [His voice fades to a murmur with distance as we move to where BOOK and The Doctor are standing.]
Doctor: [Quietly] While he's distracted, BOOK, this way, quick!
[They hurry to the door and start to slip out. Warren breaks off and calls after them as the door shuts.]
Warren: It's okay, Doctor. Run! Hide! You can't escape the Ish. There's nowhere outside language to go.

Scene – In a computer lab

[The rumble of the Ish is heard.]
Doctor: [Calling distantly] BOOK?
BOOK: Pages.
Doctor: [still distant] BOOK?
BOOK: Open.
Doctor: [Coming to the doorway of the room where BOOK is] hoh!
BOOK: [Quickly] I apologize.
Doctor: No, let's continue. Office.
BOOK: Space.
Doctor: Word.
BOOK: For word.
Doctor: Ish.
BOOK: Difficult.
Doctor: Peri.
BOOK: Pathetic?
Doctor: You're sane. Enough of that, I think… No, no — Doctor.
BOOK: Verbose.
Doctor: You've spent too much time talking with Peri. Now, let me see. [Starts to work at the computers.] Nothing. No use. [Suddenly] Don't try dematerializing, BOOK. We can't risk losing you. Oh…[He clatters around]
BOOK: Second drawer on the left.
Doctor: [Opening it] Your remote projectors. [Saddened pause.] I apologize. You do understand. Warren needs them for his plan. [He starts smashing up the projectors against the edge of the desk. Bits fly off and clatter to the floor.] Now, acts of wanton violence to valuable technology have never been my bent. Still, [Finishes destroying the projectors.] *now* Warren won't be spreading discord imminently.
BOOK: Strange that he requires *my* assistance to unleash this presence further afield. He's done a fairly adequate job already.

Doctor: You make a good point. I think in Warren's case it's the significance of *your* helping spread the Ish that matters.
BOOK: And how long can we last before he, well, *it*, breaks down our defenses?
Doctor: Yes. Defenses. Tell me, isn't it the case that so long as you're able to concentrate you're able to maintain some semblance of a level head? If you avoid direct contact with… the word in question.
BOOK: A design feature. It was considered necessary that I be able to disassociate myself from the vocabulary during periods of downtime, to position myself at somewhat of an odd angle to the language.
Doctor: Giving you, under normal circumstances, an alternative means of approaching the task of definition.
BOOK: I have maintained this askew perspective by reminding myself of the different meanings and contexts of the word 'ish.' To ish from… bullets isshing overhead…
Doctor: Never repeating the same word, because it never means the same thing. That's very good! But surely there can't be many more obscure definitions remaining.
BOOK: There is 'ishes.' In regional British dialect, it means 'hips.' But what of yourself, Doctor?
Doctor: Oh, my vocabulary is suitably immune to wandering suffixes, but we can't say the same for Peri, I'm afraid. I only hope she manages to close off the Lexisphere before it's too late.
BOOK: 'I only hope?'
Doctor: Yes?
BOOK: Is that, strictly speaking, grammatically appropriate?
Doctor: I think so. Yes.
BOOK: Um, I just wondered. For a moment.
Doctor: [Makes a sort of puzzled sound, unsure what BOOK is getting at.]

Scene – the Lexisphere

Peri: [Frustrated] Okay, we're *ed. Ug, I'm fed up with this ear thing. [There is a short devolving whine as she removes it and it turns off.] We're *ished*. We we're before we put these things on! I don't know. Maybe we were repeating 'ish' in our heads without even realizing.
Cawdrey: 'On the Unconscious as Structured as a Language.'
Peri: What?
Cawdrey: Uh, a lecture we had scheduled. Sorry, my knowledge of these things is sorely lacking.
Peri: It's only a matter of time before we end up like your attendees. [A note of dread creeps into her voice] Unable to communicate at all!
Cawdrey: What's the past tense of 'to ish?' Is that—
Peri: Cawdrey!
Cawdrey: W-what's Warren doing in all this? He's meant to be lang-ish-ing in youth detention. Must have got out on parole.
Peri: Cawdrey!!
Cawdrey: No. You're quite right. We haven't got long. Which is why I have to tell you everything. About Warren…

Scene – Computer lab

Doctor: We have a word. A self-replicating packet of information spreading indiscriminately through the campus, assisted by alleged logophiliac Warren. But is *it* assisting *him*?
BOOK: Aren't their intentions the same? To destroy language? To leave nowhere where communication is possible?
Doctor: 'There's nowhere outside language to run.' [Quotes something in French.] Warren was supremely confident in that little snippet of linguistic theory,

but it's literally true. The Ish has remained on campus, inside what I described as a text.
BOOK: Within the limits of my projection.
Doctor: Or the boundaries of the area in which the word is interested. It might easily have induced an attendee to wander off the grounds and from there take on the universe. No. Whatever the Ish wants is here on campus.
BOOK: Me.
Doctor: BOOK. The Lexicon.
BOOK: [Sadly] All we wanted was to preserve the language, to compile the most comprehensive dictionary in existence.
Doctor: Expand your word power and impress your friends in thirty days or less?
BOOK: I sound so proud. So arrogant. Perhaps it is too ponderous a task for anyone to attempt. Perhaps I'm just not very good at 'authoritative, unabridged.' Make your own joke.
Doctor: Can you blame yourself for what's happened? It's of your nature to be a lexicon. Just as it is an ineluctable fact that all of us use language. The Ish simply takes advantage, takes what *it* wants.
BOOK: [Angry at himself] If I hadn't collected it…!
Doctor: You did no wrong in assembling the dictionary. But in the end it's rewriting it that will make a difference.
BOOK: I have a billion lexical units at my disposal.
Doctor: Then let's get on with it.

Scene – The Lexisphere

[The computer hums and beeps softly in the background.]
Cawdrey: The Lexicon team set out to all record the words used by all peoples. It's an old question but, who lists the words linguists use?
Peri: Word-lovers. Logophiles.
Cawdrey: In other words, Warren.

Scene – Osefah's office

Hologlyph Osefah: I must deliver my speech. There is still time.
Warren: The Ish is the natural conclusion to your work, you understand professor? Freed from the prison of definitiveness. Free to mean whatever it wants to mean. It's power and it's *resistance* to power and it's the end of the epoch of the book! Moving towards a new moment of unfettered linguistic play!
Hologlyph Osefah: Ah! Are you done now?
Warren: [Happily] I am. Yes!
Hologlyph Osefah: Are you ready to know what you really mean?

Scene – The Lexisphere

Peri: Warren's a… hologlyph! Like BOOK!
Cawdrey: A far more advanced model than BOOK. The best I could haggle for. Warren has all the latest corrections, additions, improvements. He's an appendix.
Peri: Doesn't he realize?
Cawdrey: On some level. Maybe subconsciously.
Peri: Well, but he's *solid*; he acts human.
Cawdrey: I remember doing the programming myself. [Pauses] Can you hear that?
[There is a twilling sound]
Peri: Yes. You made Warren so that he wouldn't seem like a hologlyph!
Cawdrey: It would rather give the game away if he were to start dematerializing at will.
Peri: Give the game away?

Cawdrey: He's connected to the Lexisphere. To BOOK's lexicon. The language of which he- he studies, gathers, lives off. [Laughs nervously] It breaks all kinds of guidelines about research ownership.
Peri: You're saying that Warren's interish [makes annoyed sound] *interest* in words led him to various language fests and conferences. Where he absorbed the language used.
Cawdrey: And, I must admit, giving our competitors efforts more than a few stumpers to contend with. He's too sucsishful—suc-sess-ful—you see. Funny, isn't it? I know barely enough about hologlyphic technology to explain it to you now and I've created the creature who today presents the most voracious difficulty to language itself.
Peri: [With sudden comprehension] He wants it all. All the words! Not just the ones he was intended to study.
Cawdrey: I did contribute to the Lexicon. Sort of a ghostwriter. I was going to tell the professor. Really I was!
Peri: But when you found out what Warren was capable of, you kept it quiet, not even telling Warren what he is.
Cawdrey: I've supported him. Made sure the right words went in his direction. Kept him as much out of trouble as I'm capable. [Continues bitterly] Not that he reciprocates in any way. He's far too fond of his word-buster identity.
Peri: All this just to get some security on your investment! Disheiving—*deceiving* all these people. Stealing their work! [She starts to breathe with some distress.]
Cawdrey: Peri? Peri, you haven't given in?
Peri: [Almost yells] Perish the thought!! There's no time for blame. Oh, why didn't you tell us all this sooner?
Cawdrey: Afraid, I suppose. My real work, the Symposium, it's in tatters. I wanted to keep something for myself. Deferring the inevitable.
Peri: But if Warren's linked to the Lexisphere…
Cawdrey: The Ish can use him just as it has BOOK. More so, since he doesn't know the full extent of his abilities.
Peri: This is why we came here. Why we have to shut this place down!
Cawdrey: Then… let's get to work. [He begins working at the nearest keyboard.]

Scene – Conference room

Hologlyph Osefah: Another delay! Goodness me, always delays, deferral, disconnection. Ah! I am starting to appreciate what is going on here. Looking out at your empty faces, the full significance of the thing eludes me yet, but it makes what I had written for this occasion spectacularly irrelevant. Instead of a speech, I'm going to tell you a story. It concerns a friend of mine. Someone about whom I have had ample time and due occasion to consider, a man whose love of language has never gone unrequited.

Scene – in a building on campus.

Doctor: [Opening a door to enter] Where did the Ish originate? Near, or perhaps within a singularity of meaning? Itself somehow maintained eons after creation in a culture that worshiped language.
BOOK: The Omniverbum was the extent of their pantheon. They held words up as sacred and the longest word most of all.
Doctor: But how is it the longest word still? Three hundred thousand years of plasma oscillations is a long time. But it was also a long time ago…
BOOK: There were some among that culture that believed that the universe had never stopped pronouncing the Omniverbum.
Doctor: With an implausibly long series of silent consonants?
BOOK: They say, perhaps, it is spoken yet and will only end with the death of its speaker.
Doctor: Oh, never mind the mythologizing. We can imagine the Omniverbum, or

the idea of it, as a linguistic nexus, drawing in other terms.
BOOK: And that is where the Ish originated?
Doctor: Where the Ish… fed. Until you inadvertently granted it access to a whole new swathe of wordstock to consume.
[The Doctor and BOOK pass through another door.]
BOOK: But it didn't spread until now.
Doctor: Oh, the Ish is cunning. It adapted to its new context. Found your knowledge that this conference was coming up… I mean, *linguists*. Who better to satisfy its appetites?
BOOK: With myself as headwaiter and the main course.
Doctor: [Laughs grimly] You may be correct. The conference attendees provide a sort of intellectual *buffet.* Breaks down their capacity to structure language and gorges on fragmentary meaning. But your Lexicon is its home feeding ground.
BOOK: What can we do to stop it?
Doctor: Well, trying to stay with the culinary metaphor, if we can, I'm going to Doctor the menu.

Scene – the Lexisphere

[The computers hum and twitter.]
Cawdrey: Right. I've disassociated BOOK from the vocabulary draining routines. he ones that kept Warren on a steady diet.
[Warren appears with a different version of the hologlyph-activation sound than BOOK and Hologlyph Osefah make. The Ish are with him
hissing *ish* continually.]
Warren: Hey! Stop that!
Peri: Warren!
Warren: What will locking away the dictionary do? When I already know all the filthy words.
Peri: [Urgently] Ignore him, Cawdrey. Keep shutting down the systems.
Cawdrey: R-right.
Warren: Why fight the inescapable? The Ish is a dream come true, Peri! Every word, every speaker of words yours to play with!
Cawdrey: That's not the case at all, Warren.
Warren: Except now I'm told that the dream wasn't even mine. It was defined for me.
Peri: Warren… we're trying to help you, trying to save everybody.
Warren: Hollow. Clichéd. Enough of that. Once the Ish has liberated everyone's minds—
Peri: Liberated!
Warren: – we'll be part of no one else's games. Not even the campus police can stop us now!
Peri: And what then? You're going to define everything the way *you* like it? What happened to words being fun? Your love of language working?
Warren: No!…Don't! [Warningly.] Don't. You can't stop this any more than you can fight continental shift. [Whispers.] Let it happen, Peri.
Peri: I— [Makes a strangled noise and a gasp as if fighting back pain] Ish. [Screams] Ish!
Cawdrey: Peri? P-peri, resist it!
Peri: [Struggles for breath and control of her mind.]
Cawdrey: Warren, please! It's not your fault; you're under its control!
Warren: Should I look inside myself, Dad? Find my own words to express myself?
Ish: [Rise in volume for a moment then go back to their quiet chanting] Ish, ish, ish…
Warren: This from a man whose entire career has been based on stealing other people's words.
Cawdrey: Damn it, I made you!
Warren: Osefah has told me everything.
Cawdrey: What?

Warren: Yes! She knew all about your ‘little side project’ but she let me keep following the work, draining the research using this *thing* in my head. You know why?
Cawdrey: No.
Warren: She felt sorry for you!
Cawdrey: No!
Warren: She pitied you!
Cawdrey: No!!
Peri: Warren! Stop thisisssss ISH! Ish.
Warren: She knew you’d never produce anything worthwhile on your own.
Cawdrey: No, Warren…. No… Warren… No… [Trails off, repeating himself in a shriveled whisper.]

Scene – The Main Conference Room

Hologlyph Osefah: There is a way of life in every way of speaking, and that is what distinguishes my friend. Not the way he dresses or the way he looks. When he speaks there is something quite different involved. I don’t know what we might call it—a Doctor-ese, or Doctoria! It doesn’t matter. It is what comes into use in those situations he finds himself in where there seems like no hope of success and it is what allows him to defeat whatever difficulties he faces armed only with his wits and his wit. But what if one day my friend encountered something which could meet him on the same level? Something at home in language itself? How can the Doctor talk his way out of this one?

Scene – the Lexisphere

Warren: [Whispering sinisterly] Your mind, Peri. Get rid of all those robbed words you never felt happy using. [Whispers even more softly] Loosen your tongue.
Peri: You’ve got a warped sense of freedom… Warren… [struggles as she says the next word, as if fighting against saying it] *ish*. Ish. Ish.
Doctor: Ah, there you are! Peri!
Peri: Doctor!
Warren: Terrific. Mister Periphrasis.
Doctor: Ah, is that term loaded?
Warren: What now, the man in the coat of many colors come to sell himself to—
Doctor: Oh, circumlocute this! [He starts to work on the computers.]
Warren: What? What are you doing?
Doctor: That’s the thing about these Lexisphere ordinatures—the harmonics have to be exactly calibrated to maintain the projection of hologlyphs.
Warren: [Makes a strangled sound] What… are you… [Static.] … at’s happening?
Doctor: I’m running a few interference patterns in your quantum hyrographics. That is to say, changing your recipe. A little less salt, if you please.
Warren: [Sputters, then angrily] Ish! Ish! [Static] Uhhh! Ish! ish… It’s spreading!
Doctor: We’ve passed on the viral analogy. If you’re going to define our reality through language, you could at least keep up with our tastes.
Warren: [Makes choking, gasping noises, sound of effort]
Doctor: Well, don’t mince your words. You might end up having to eat them.
Warren: [Chokes] Ukk-kkkkk
Doctor: Oh, far too many consonants. That’s your linguistic freedom? You’ll choke if you’re not too careful.
Warren: [Continues to make straining and gasping sounds but more muffled.]
Doctor: Now, that’s bought us a little more time to talk freely. What’s been happening? Cawdrey?
Cawdrey: No… Warren…
Peri: Warren sent him over the edge. [Rounds on Warren] Poisoned his mind, didn’t you?

Warren: [Grunts, gasps]
Peri: [Whispering to the Doctor] You didn't do anything to those computers, did you?
Doctor: [In an undertone.] He doesn't know that. [Loudly] Yes, I established a feedback loop. [Whispers again] Which is what matters.
Peri: Warren is Cawdrey's son. I guess. Except he's also linked to Osefah's work. Kind of a younger brother of BOOK.
Warren: [Struggles and manages to speak coherently] Akg!… The Ish is no mere *mot jus*…[Static] It means to win!
Doctor: It *means* nothing of the sort. We'll all be empty receptacles for the contemplation of lexical transcendence. Is that what you really want? To go after the Omniverbum?
Warren: [Still speaking with great effort] Call me… Ish… mael!"
Doctor: [Makes a sound as if rolling eyes at this.]
Warren: That's a reference to… the Ish is…[losing control] What have you done?
Doctor: What's the matter, Warren? That old mad scheme of yours not to its liking? Or perhaps the Ish simply doesn't like you anymore. Well, it's hardly surprising. For an alleged lover of language you do have a rather prosaic ranting style.
Warren: [Outraged] The Ish… The Ish… Ish… [suddenly panicked] Don't leave me!
Doctor: I mean, here we are at your species' first encounter with a fully sentient meme and all you care about is me, me, me, me, me…
Warren: [Screams]
Peri: Warren!
Ish: [Suddenly audible and overlapping wildly] Ish, Ish, Ish…!
Doctor: Looking for a new host, Ish? Well, grub's up. Try *my* mind!
Peri: Doc—
[Silence falls and then a wavery sound, as if underwater]
Ish: [each word echoing] Lost!… Oscillating… Confused…. Hungry
Doctor: Charming. None of these words conveys exact sense. But isn't that the point of language? Not exactitude, expression! Not just bland description, but metaphor.
Ish: [echoing BOOK's voice as if they have recorded it] Almost a word… Not quite… slightly askew…
Doctor: Call yourself a meta-vore! Not taking the time to savor the meanings you devour. You've been to a great feast of language and stolen away the scraps.
Ish: [Distressed whirling sounds] Ish… ish!
Doctor: Not so appetizing in here, eh? My mind's made of stronger stuff. Now, what are you really after?
Ish: [Echoing the sound of Osefah's voice] What's another word for…
Doctor: Another word? The Omniverbum. You're homesick for your natural habitat. It's where you belong. As an affix to the longest word. [Echoes of the Ish blend unintelligibly] Please. Give me this chance. Leave everybody else, return all the affected people to normal, and I'll *try* to return you at least back to where you were collected. This can all have been just a terrible misunderstanding.
Ish: [Now like a recording of Warren's voice] There's nowhere outside language to run! [Switches to echoing the Doctor's words.] Mastery of English? …English! What a versatile language. English… [The word 'English' reverberates and repeats with the 'ish' syllable becoming more pronounced.]
Doctor: Yes. English. You've manifested as the word 'Ish' from the Engl-ish language. Not *esk* from French, the () of Delphon, or even the 'whoops, sorry!' of the planet Jalikaji.
Ish: Enngliiissssh!
Doctor: Yes. If you won't listen to me, then consider the words we both use. English isn't like those other languages. It adapts, like other languages, exchanges words with them. Other languages evolve; so does English. Other languages die out. English *doesn't*. [His voice begins to echo again.] Do you

realize what you're up against? I can help you… save English. Let me try.
Ish: Enngliiissssh! Enngliiissssh!

Scene – The Lexisphere

Peri: [finishing the word she started shouting] —tor! Doctor!
Doctor: No!! [Gasps and gulps like a diver coming up for air] Oh! Oh, Ish ought to be a four letter word!
Warren: No Warren! No Cawdrey! [Laughs with insane hysteria] Only Ish!… Ish… ish…[voice hardens with anger] Ish!!…[sad again] We were going to change everything… [Starts to work on the computer] Ish…
Ish: Ish, ish, ish…!
Peri: [fragile, trying to shut out the Ish] She sells… she… sea… she ssells
Doctor: Peri!
Peri: …shells
Doctor: Oh, Peri.
Peri: She… she…
Doctor: Peri?
Peri: She… [her voice fades to silence]
Doctor: Peri. This can't be the end? Meaningless destruction can have won!
Ish: [With more individuality and force than ever] Enngliiissssh! Enngliiissssh!

Scene – The Main Conference Room

Hologlyph Osefah: Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for listening. [Sound of a hologlyph activating]
BOOK: Osefah? I know it isn't you, the Osefah I knew, but it's as close a definition as we have. Maybe that's enough.
Hologlyph Osefah: We all need our language. Without it we are lost. Good-bye. [She deactivates.]
BOOK: OSEFAH!!!

Scene – The Lexisphere

Ish: Enngliiissssh! Enngliiissssh! Enngliiissssh!
Peri: Give your do-dad another try.
Doctor: My 'do-dad'?
Peri: Widget. Gizmo.
Doctor: Honestly, you are, upon frequent occasion, exasperatingly colloquial. And of all times at a time like this, Peri. [Pauses and then repeats slowly, thoughtfully] At a time like this, Peri…
Peri: What?
Doctor: I think I get it. It Ish feeds on meanings. But it does so one word at a time. If we were to give it related but conflicting examples… English and American alternatives…
Peri: [excitedly] It won't know which ones to choose!
Doctor: It might be enough. Lift.
Peri: Lift what?
Doctor: *Lift*!
Peri: Oh! Um, elevator. Uh…
Doctor: Tap.
Peri: Faucet!… Meat grinder.
Doctor: Mincer. Scrumping.
Peri: Er, stealing fruit.
Doctor: Words you remember growing up with, back in your country's language. Porridge.
Peri: Oatmeal. Cookies.
Doctor: Biscuits.
Peri: Crackers.

Doctor: Do-lally.
Cawdrey: My head hurts…
Doctor: Join in, Warren. Or are you not the full shilling?
Peri: Or a few nickels short of a dollar?
Doctor: We need to keep upping the stakes. ‘left-tenent’
Peri: ‘lou-tenent’
Doctor: ‘al-lou-*mini*-um’
Peri: ‘a-*loom*-in-um’
Doctor: ‘glahz’
Peri: ‘glass’
Doctor: It’s working, Peri! Can you feel the Ish losing control?
Peri: Custer!
Doctor: Derriere! We mustn’t yield.
Peri: Give way!
Doctor: Or there might be a jam.
Peri: Jelly! Jell-O.
Doctor: Jelly. Underground.
Peri: Subway. Underpants. ‘sked-ual’
Doctor: ‘shed-uel’
Warren: Let’s call the whole thing… Ish?
Ish: [Hiss furiously, then fall silent]
Peri: It’s given up!
Doctor: Cheerio!
Peri: See you later!
Doctor: Vive la difference! Peri?
Peri: Yes?
Doctor: Thank you. [Turning] Cawdrey, get up. We’ve got the Ish in full retreat.
Peri: But where’s it retreated *to*? Somewhere or someone? BOOK or Warren?
Cawdrey: [Groans]
Peri: I give up
[A hologlyph comes on.]
BOOK: The corruption beings to lift from the campus information systems. Act quickly and we can stop it.
Doctor: You’re right. [Turns to the now unscrambled computer labels and starts working the keys.] Legibility, how I’ve missed you. Now, I can trace the Ish’s line of flight and then—
[A rumble is heard, growing louder]
Peri: Doctor, I don’t think we have time!
Doctor: Oh, no! It’s the Omniverbum. [The rumble still increases and some clattering sounds are added.] It’s breaking through with all the force of the birth-pangs of the universe! Let’s go. Come on!
[The Doctor, Peri, and BOOK run outdoors.]
Doctor: Hurry. We need to get to safety.
[A hologlyph activates.]
Warren: Safety? Safety? That’s okay. Scurry off to your safe lives, with your safe ways of speaking.
Doctor: [Groans in annoyance] Oh, please.
Warren: You were all, just for a moment open to the possibilities the Ish offers but instead you want safety! You’re nothing but prisoners to your own lack of imagination!
Doctor: Sticks and stones.
[The hologlyph sound wavers and Warren deactivates.]
Doctor: [Puzzled] Well, that’s a new one.
Peri: He knows he’s a hologlyph!
BOOK: He’s going back to the Lexicon.

Scene – The Lexisphere

[Warren activates with the usual hologlyph sound, hardly audible over the vast rumbling of the approaching Omniverbum.]

Warren: They never understood what you can do with language. What you can do to people. [There are loud crashes and bangs as the building starts losing some of its structural integrity.] I'm ready. I can feel it. The Omniverbum!!

Scene – outside on campus

Doctor: Well, that's the worst thing that could have happened!
Peri: What?
Doctor: Think. Us, Peri. Cawdrey, BOOK, even Osefah—the Ish took everybody else on campus out of action because only *we* had the capability to reunite it with its origins.
Peri: And it's chosen Warren.
Doctor: He stands now at the boundary of reality and vocabulary. Only he doesn't want the Ish to return to whence it came.
BOOK: He wants to bring the Omniverbum here. But that's impossible!
Warren: We have to stop Warren carrying out his mad plan. If the Omniverbum were physically articulated the consequences would be far more inflammatory than anything we've witnessed today.
Peri: Why?
Doctor: Do you remember when I suggested reality itself involves a kind of communication?
Peri: Um-hm.
Doctor: Well, whatever the Ish is to our languages, the Omniverbum is to the universe. Something which threatens it very composition and structure.
BOOK: But we can hear it already arriving. We have no way to prevent it.
Doctor: No, we *have*. The Ish got into *your* vocabulary, but what brought the Omniverbum from doing likewise? The contents of the dictionary! The words themselves.
Peri: The English language!
Doctor: The only thing vaster than even the longest word. It's up to you, BOOK. Dissociate yourself from the entire word-horde. Hit the Lexisphere with the full force of every English speaker in history.
BOOK: You don't know what you're asking. The Lexicon isn't designed for that level of output.
Doctor: Precisely.
[BOOK dematerializes.]

Scene – The Lexisphere

[The Omniverbum continues to rumble and shake the whole building.]
Warren: [With a sort of delirious happiness] Everything is language. Everything is the Omniverbum!
Ish: IISSSSHHHHHH!!!!!!!
Warren: Pronounce meee!!
[A simply TREMENDOUS explosion.]

Scene – Outside on campus.

Doctor: [Seeing the explosion] He did it!
Peri: He stopped the Omniverbum!
[BOOK materializes.]
Doctor: Well done, BOOK.
Peri: [sighs in relief] It's over.
BOOK: [Distraught] My life's work… my life *is* work… my life as work… can't find, can't find anything everyword!
Doctor: BOOK?
BOOK: What did I do? What did I do…?

Scene – The Main Conference Room

[There is a hubbub of talking and mumbling as the attendees of the conference wake from their ish-induced trances and try to figure out what just happened.]
Doctor: The attendees will work their way back to sanity and coherence and having plenty to disagree about, recovery should take, ooh about as long as it takes for the authorities to start asking questions.
Peri: But is the Ish back where it came from? I mean, is it really gone?
Doctor: Traces remain. As they do of all words. But only traces. Entries in a vocabulary. Column fillers.
Peri: We can say [lowers voice a fraction] ish, without worrying? Even use it more than once?
Doctor: Nothing is left of the Ish as a living entity. Not at odds with our world or our minds. It never wanted to leave conceptual space. Language and humanity have lived together peacefully since before either was sentient.
Peri: And Warren?
Doctor: We can only assume that wherever the Ish has gone it took him along for the… rite.
Peri: [Looking across the conference room] What about *him*.
Doctor: Cawdrey? I don't know.
Peri: [As Robert is led past] Good-bye, Cawdrey!
Doctor: [Sadly] Well, they can try but…
Peri: Won't he ever recover?
Doctor: I'm afraid he won't. The experience has left poor Cawdrey without language… forever.
[A communicator chimes, the crowd continues to chatter in the background.]

Scene – Outside on campus

[The Doctor, Peri, and BOOK walk along a path.]
Peri: What will you do next, BOOK? It's not as if you can project outside the college.
Doctor: Well, I *had* to destroy his remote projectors. I was trying to stop Warren.
BOOK: To be honest, I should not project at all. The Lexicon is gone, the Lexisphere beyond repair and here I am, a self-inscribed hologlyph. The faculty don't know what to make of me.
[Osefah comes up to the group and joins them]
Hologlyph Osefah: Of us.
Doctor: Professor Osefah de Palabra, how good to see you feeling better. [They round a corner and stop before the Doctor's space-time machine.] Ah, here we are. Do you like my, um, what's the word, Peri?
Peri: [Slightly annoyed] TARDIS.
Hologlyph Osefah: Doctor, you have often told me about the vast collection of references in your library. If I might have a brief browse?
Doctor: Osefah, all the assistance you need is right here. In BOOK.
Hologlyph Osefah: Ah, you're right. It is early days yet but we have been offered a joint position as advisors to the faculty's next dictionary. In a strictly hands-off capacity.
BOOK: It's a paper edition.
Doctor: Good! But leave a few blank pages. There are other sentient words out there, not all of them as belligerent as Ish. I've met a few myself. The Adjective of Noun, the insouciant maladictaballoons, and then there was the mysterious simile known only As.
Peri: So, a new job for you both. Great!
Doctor: And if we ever pass this way again, we'll look you up. [Peri kicks the Doctor in the shin meaningfully.] Ow! Why are you kicking me?
BOOK: The task before us is daunting. We have to start all over again. Take on the language again and this time slower than the speed of conversation. Without the latest technology and all the structure and guidance it provides?

Doctor: BOOK, of course you will be all right. Read! Write! Talk amongst yourselves. Oh, you have the whole cosmos of language to discover all over again.
Peri: From start to—
Doctor: Fin… *ish*.
[Peri groans at this joke and the Doctor chuckles delightedly. The pair enter the TARDIS and close the doors. As BOOK and Hologlyph Osefah watch, the TARDIS fades away with its cosmically wheezing engines, off to another adventure.]

[Ending theme music plays.]